

The Long Journey

JAMES SALEE

THE boy stood near the entrance to the club-car and looked at the people. And the people who stirred in the smoke were like people in a dream.

There was a woman who sat talking to a soldier. She had a pencil over her ear and held a glass in her hand. Her gums were whitish when she talked. The soldier nodded his head in long, easy movements that seemed ever about to stop and yet continued on, like the pendulum of a clock. And once when he turned all the way around, the boy saw his face. For a moment it seemed a face with no eyes, a face whose eyes had no pupils. Like a statue, the eyes were so dull and dry.

There was a large, fat man who sat upright in a chair like a white-gloved bishop fingering his crozier. He was a great sociology professor from Chicago, but he had the features of a peasant. And now and then his little eyes would quiver and bulge in their sockets like those of a great dog striving to break clear of the force that held its head.

There was an empty seat; the boy sat down. The three boys in the booth across the aisle were singing "Good Night, Ladies." He knew them; they were from school. One of them recognized him, left off singing, and leaned across the aisle, shoving a tall frosted glass into his face. "It's a Tom Collins, Ed," he said; "tastes like lemonade." Ed did not want to draw attention; he did not know what to say. So he took a sip. It did taste like lemonade.

The man next to him, a portly gentleman who looked as if he fed within himself and quite enjoyed the fare, asked where he came from.

"Fort Wayne."

"You don't sound like a Hoosier."

"I used to live in New York."

More people were filing into the already overcrowded car. Ed decided he did not want anything. He got up, squeezed through the crowd and walked back to his coach.

Johnny was still asleep with his hat over his eyes; Ed picked up the magazines and sat down next to him. The girl in the seat ahead whom Johnny had kidded earlier was now talking to a blond, well-scrubbed sailor.

A group of college boys were clustered about two girls in the first seats. Ed watched them. They were matching pennies, talking and laughing. Johnny had called the girls farmerettes, for they wore moccasins, woolen shirts and dungarees. One girl was sitting on the arm of the seat, chewing gum. She would clap her hands together and laugh when she won. She seemed to win quite often. She was slim and lithe in boy's clothes.

Somehow Ed wanted to shout at them to be still, to stop laughing. He wondered what would happen, how he would feel. But it would not be like him to do it. *And yet he screamed at them.* And he listened to himself in wonder.

Everyone had turned and was staring at him. They did not understand at first. He wished they would never understand. He wished they were all asleep. Then the girl snickered. Only Johnny slept. And he could hear them, not with his ear alone, murmuring against him.

He wished the night would come and the searching white light on the ceiling would give peace to the soft darkness and

the faint blue lights. He had always waited for the night. The light of the day, he used to tell himself, was a thing that snatched the covers from the shivering world. It would never let him alone; it hurt his eyes. It showed him things he did not like to see. The sleeping drunk who rolled off his seat in the railroad station and split his head. The blind, legless man who wheeled himself about in a little cart and tried to sell pencils as the crowd hurried by. The backyards of cities you saw from a train. And he would ask himself why he had warm clothes and was riding on a train homeward. He could never be happy or self-content this way.

He would close his eyes and pretend to sleep. They were looking at him, as people were always looking at him, as the gray man had looked at him in the theatre lobby the time his mother had given him a ten dollar bill to buy the tickets and he had hurried after her, clumsily stuffing the change into his wallet, and the man asked for a quarter, but he did not hear. He would sit here in the brilliant car naked before all people and he would wait for the old self-hatred to seize him. It would not be very long. And it did not really matter. Nothing would ever matter. He would close his eyes and pretend to sleep.

THE ANT-HILL

JOANN-LEE JOHNSON

The world is an ant-hill
 Swarming with men,
Who seethe with activity,
 Like ants in their den.
They scramble about the
 Face of the earth,
Going no-where for nothing
 With no time for mirth!